

Exotic Newcastle Disease Outbreak in Backyard Poultry: Information for neighbors near affected premises January 2003

What is Exotic Newcastle Disease?

Exotic Newcastle disease is a serious, highly contagious viral disease of poultry and other birds. After an incubation period of 2-15 days, the disease may cause high rates of sickness and death in susceptible birds, especially chickens. Other types of birds may be infected but with less serious effects. These birds, also called “inapparent carriers”, may still be able to spread the disease. There is no effective cure and vaccination is of limited value.

How is it spread?

The disease is easily spread to birds by sick birds and infected birds that may appear healthy. These healthy appearing birds may be incubating or recovering from the disease, or be of a species that is not as seriously affected by exotic Newcastle disease. Spread may also occur by people, and their clothing and possessions, and equipment and vehicles that have become contaminated with the virus through contact with infected birds. The illegal movement of birds has been implicated in past outbreaks. Birds imported legally are quarantined and screened for this serious disease.

When, where, and how did the outbreak start?

The outbreak was first identified in a backyard flock in Nevada in January 2003.

What types of birds are involved in the outbreak?

As of January, only backyard poultry have been affected. However, when backyard poultry are infected other birds on the premises have to be destroyed. This is necessary to stop the spread of the disease. **NO COMMERCIAL POULTRY IS INVOLVED IN THE OUTBREAK.**

What is being done to stop the outbreak?

Surveillance and disease investigation crews are working in affected areas to stop the outbreak. To stop the disease they **must** have the support of the community so that they can quickly identify where the disease is present. Infected birds, and birds that may have been exposed to sources of infection, are humanely destroyed. This is the only way to stop the outbreak and protect other birds in the area. Owners of the birds are paid a fair price. The premises is then thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. It will stand vacant for a time and then birds can be reintroduced. There will be monitoring for continued signs of infection on the premises and in the surrounding areas.